CLAIMS

1. A system for providing interactive content comprising:

an interactive content code detector, coupled to a video stream to be transmitted to local subsystems, for detecting an interactive content code and transmitting a control signal responsive to detecting an interactive content code; and

a data insertion unit, coupled to the interactive content code detector, for receiving the control signal and inserting interactive content into the video stream responsive to information contained in the control signal.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the data insertion unit is positioned to insert interactive content into the video stream immediately prior to the video stream being transmitted to a transmission source to ensure that the interactive content remains in the video stream upon transmission.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein a video stream generator generates the video stream and the interactive content code detector is coupled to the output of the video stream generator.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein interactive content codes are placed in a stream alternate to the stream used to carry interactive content codes.

5. The system of claim 1 in which the interactive content code detector and the data insertion unit are coupled to a same point in the transmission path.

6. The system of claim 5 wherein the interactive content code is a universal resource locator and the data insertion unit inserts an interactive content corresponding to the universal resource locator.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the interactive content code detector is a vertical blanking interval reader.

8. A method for providing interactive content in a broadcast facility that transmits a video broadcast stream containing video for delivery along a transmission path for delivery to end users and contains equipment that may corrupt interactive content, comprising:

inserting an interactive content code into a video broadcast stream, wherein the interactive content code specifies an interactive content to accompany a video broadcast in the video broadcast stream;

reading the interactive content code;

inserting an interactive content corresponding to the interactive content code into the video stream.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein inserting an interactive content further comprises inserting an interactive content corresponding to the interactive content code at a point in the transmission path after a last point in the transmission path where the interactive content may be corrupted.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein reading an interactive content code occurs at a point in the transmission path prior to an interactive content being corrupted.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein the interactive content code is inserted into a region of the video stream that is preserved by the broadcast facility.

12. The method of claim 8 wherein the interactive content is inserted into the video stream at the same point in the transmission path at which the interactive content code is read.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the interactive content code is read at a point in the transmission path after which broadcast facility equipment that may corrupt an interactive content is coupled to the transmission path.

14. A method for providing interactive content in a broadcast facility that transmits a video broadcast stream containing video for delivery along a transmission path for delivery to end users and contains equipment that may corrupt interactive content, comprising:

inserting an interactive content code into a video broadcast stream, wherein the interactive content code specifies an interactive content to accompany a video broadcast in the video broadcast stream, and wherein the interactive content code is inserted into a region of the video stream that is preserved by the broadcast facility;

reading the interactive content code; and

inserting an interactive content corresponding to the interactive content code into the video stream at a point in the transmission path after a point in the transmission path where broadcast facility equipment that may corrupt the interactive content is coupled to the transmission path.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein inserting an interactive content code further comprises inserting a plurality of interactive content codes in different regions of the video broadcast signal.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein at least one of the regions is preserved by at least one local subsystem.

17. A method for providing interactive content in a broadcast facility that transmits a video broadcast stream containing video for delivery along a transmission path for delivery to end users and contains equipment that may corrupt interactive content, comprising:

inserting a reference to an interactive content into a region of the video stream that is preserved by the broadcast facility.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein inserting a reference further comprises inserting a Universal Resource Locator that is linked to an interactive content into a region of the video stream that is preserved by the broadcast facility.

19. A system for providing interactive content comprising:

an interactive content code detector, coupled to a video stream to be transmitted to local subsystems, for detecting an interactive content code and transmitting a control signal responsive to detecting an interactive content code; and

a data insertion unit, coupled to the interactive content code detector, for receiving the control signal and inserting interactive content into the video stream responsive to information contained in the control signal, wherein the data insertion unit is positioned to insert interactive content into the video

stream immediately prior to the video stream being transmitted to a transmission source to ensure that the interactive content remains in the video stream upon transmission.

20. A system for providing interactive content comprising:

an interactive content detection unit, coupled to a video stream received from a broadcast facility, for detecting an interactive content code and transmitting a control signal responsive to detecting an interactive content code; and

a data insertion unit, coupled to the interactive content code detector, for receiving the control signal and inserting interactive content into the video stream responsive to information contained in the control signal.

21. The system of claim 20 wherein the data insertion unit is positioned to insert interactive content into the video stream immediately prior to the video stream being transmitted to customer premise equipment to ensure that the interactive content remains in the video stream upon transmission.

22. The system of claim 20 in which the interactive content code detector and the data insertion unit are coupled to a same point in the transmission path.

23. The system of claim 20 wherein the interactive content code is a universal resource locator and the data insertion unit inserts an interactive content corresponding to the universal resource locator.

24. The system of claim 20, wherein the interactive content code detector is a vertical blanking interval reader.

25. A method of ensuring reliable delivery of interactive content comprising:

inserting a plurality of interactive content codes into different regions of data in a video stream to be broadcast to a plurality of local subsystems, wherein the interactive content codes correspond to an interactive content to be inserted into the video stream, and each region of data is preserved by at least one local subsystem.

26. A method of ensuring reliable delivery of interactive content comprising:

inserting an interactive content code into a closed caption region of a video stream, wherein the interactive content code corresponds to an interactive content to be inserted into the video stream, and the closed caption region is preserved by at least one local subsystem.

27. A method of ensuring reliable delivery of interactive content in which a video component of a broadcast signal is used to convey interactive content, comprising the steps of:

inserting an interactive content code into a component of the broadcast signal alternate to the component used to convey interactive content;

detecting the interactive content code in the broadcast signal; and

inserting interactive content corresponding to the interactive content code into the broadcast signal.